

California Regional Water Resources Control Board

Central Coast Region

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Date: December 8, 2006

TO: Interested parties

FROM: Roger Briggs
Executive Officer
RWQCB, Central Coast Region

SUBJECT: POSTPONING STAFF EFFORTS TO PREPARE THE SALINAS RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES NUTRIENT TMDL FOR REGIONAL BOARD APPROVAL

Water Board staff will complete a Preliminary Project Report (Report) for the Salinas River and Tributaries Nutrient TMDL by February 2007. The report incorporates the following 303(d) listed water bodies (collectively referred to as the project area) as part of the TMDL: the lower Salinas River (from Gonzales downstream to the Salinas River Lagoon), the Salinas River Lagoon, the Old Salinas River Estuary, Tembladero Slough, the Salinas Reclamation Canal, Alisal Creek, and Quail Creek. These water bodies were listed as impaired due to nitrate, unionized ammonia, nutrients, or a combination thereof.

The Report includes an analysis of nitrate and unionized ammonia sources and concentrations in the project area. Staff concludes that irrigated agriculture is the single source resulting in the exceedance of water quality objectives related to nitrate and unionized ammonia.

The Regional Board approved the Conditional Waiver of Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands (Agricultural Waiver) in July 2004. The intent of the Agricultural Waiver is to ensure that “discharges [from irrigated lands] are not causing or contributing to exceedances of any Regional, State, or Federal numeric or narrative water quality standard.” As such, if the goals of the Agricultural Waiver are achieved, the impairments to the water bodies listed above will be resolved.

Given these circumstances, further efforts by Water Board staff to prepare the Salinas River and Tributaries Nutrient TMDL for approval by the Regional Board are postponed.

Water Board staff will assess whether and when to continue preparation for approval of the TMDL at one or more of the following junctures: during TMDL Program review at the end of the fiscal year (June 2007); during, or resulting from, evaluations of compliance with the Agricultural Waiver (anticipated January 2008); during, or resulting from, the assessment to renew the Agricultural Waiver (July 2009).

The 303(d) list includes a subset of water bodies designated as “Water Quality Segments Being Addressed by Other Actions Than TMDLs.” Staff may recommend that the Salinas nutrient-



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Linda S. Adams
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

related listings in the project area be placed on this subset during the 2008 303(d) listing update.

For additional information regarding this postponement, please call Water Board staff person Christopher Rose, at 805-542-4770. Current and future status of this TMDL is posted on the Water Board website at:

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/TMDL/303dandTMDLprojects.htm>

Cc:

Cheryl McGovern, TMDL Liaison to Central Coast Regional Board, US Environmental Protection Agency

Ken Harris, TMDL Section Chief, State Water Resources Control Board

Lisa Horowitz McCann, TMDL Program Manager, Central Coast Water Board

Alison Jones, Agricultural Waiver Program Lead, Central Coast Water Board

Salinas River and Tributaries Nutrient TMDL IPL

File: Salinas River Nutrient TMDL

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California Environmental Protection Agency

